



# NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A non-profit organization dedicated to the education  
of its membership and the conservation of all  
amphibians and reptiles.



Volume 36 Number 9

September 2025

## HHS Monthly Meeting

**Guest Speaker – Nate Engbrecht**  
**State Herpetologist: Indiana DNR**

*Topic – “Hellbenders, Crawfish Frogs, and Kirtland’s Snakes:  
An Update from the Indiana DNR Herpetology Program”*

Wednesday, September 17, 7:00PM  
Holliday Park Nature Center

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Thank you and welcome to the Hoosier Herpetological Society! Thank you to our returning members!  
Without all of you, we wouldn't be the organization that we've grown to be today!

### Renewals

Ethan Estabrook

### New Members

Linda Horton  
Samuel Sotelo

# Annual HHS kayak/Canoe Float

Jim Horton

On a sunny Saturday August 23<sup>rd</sup> morning, about 20 HHS members assembled at Blues Canoe Livery in Edinburgh. The group would soon be on a 7-mile paddle trip back to Blues. Members boarded a bus with trailered kayaks behind for the Driftwood River near the Camp Atterbury area.



As the group entered the water, a northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*) was found almost immediately. After admiration and photos from the group, the snake was soon released.

Northern water snakes are abundant on the river. Large branches overhanging the water is a good place for them to bask.



Two Queen snakes (*Regina septemvittata*) were spotted but too quick for photos.

Several northern map turtles were spotted along the way by our members. We kept a count of the many turtles that were found that day.

The river was busy with revelers and floaters that day. Unfortunately, this constant commotion disturbs basking turtles and snakes. It also affects our viewing and counts.



An impressive 86 turtles were counted during the float. The majority of them were northern maps and spiny softshell turtles. Both species of softshell occur on this waterway. Spiny (*Apalone spinifera*) are the more common softshell species but Smooth softshells (*Apalone mutica*) can be spotted on this river with some patience (and good binoculars).



All three of Indiana's native species of map turtles are found on the Driftwood.

Common (*Graptemys geographica*), False (*Graptemys pseudogeographica*), and Ouachita (*Graptemys ouachitensis*) map turtles all share the Driftwood River system. We recorded nearly 10 Ouachita map turtles and less than 3 false maps. Common maps were by far the most seen on the float. The smallest yearling and hatchling turtles are easy to approach to photograph. These little ones are easily captured for close up photography and examination as well.



Blue and green herons, bald eagles, and osprey can be seen while traversing the river. We spotted a few osprey flying above, soaring in and out of the tree line.

Belted kingfishers are common as well along the river system. The familiar chattering gives this bird away as they veer in and out of sight. These birds plunge head first into the water, spearing their prey (fish) like a dagger.



Our group is known for frequent stops along the river. Here, we hydrate, enjoy snacks, and explore the area. It is also a good

chance to find more wildlife.

Some of our younger members combed the shoreline for herps. They came up with cricket frogs, five-lined skinks, toads, and several species of butterfly.

These *breaks* are a great way to mingle and network with members.



Another HHS annual float is in the books. Hope to see you there next year!

[www.hoosierherpsociety.org](http://www.hoosierherpsociety.org)

## Herpetology Quiz

By Kimberly Scott

1. As of now, the Iguana genus has how many species?

- 45
- 10
- 2
- 26

2. True or false? Rotating a turtle egg will kill the developing embryo.

3. Can snakes be genetic twins?

- Yes, when 2 embryos develop in the same shell
- Yes, all eggs in the clutch are genetic twins
- No there can only be one snake per shell since space is limited
  - only if they're conjoined.

4. What do Marbled salamanders do during the fall?

- They are known for migrating long distance between forested ridges after the deciduous trees lose their leaves, they do this to find the best area to overwinter.
- They feast on late summer insects and earthworms to build fat storages to last them through the winter, they then dig down to hibernate near dried up vernal pool sites.

- They lay eggs under rotting logs or leaf litter, usually in a dried up pool basin. When the fall or winter rains come, the pools fill, eggs hatch, and the larval salamanders start to develop in the cold waters.
- They court their mates and overwinter with them so that they can get an early start to the breeding season when the winter ice thaws in early spring.

5. Cane toads are known as invasive species in many places that they live, but where are they native to?

- Hawaii
- Central and South America
  - Indonesia
  - Northern Australia

## What you missed at the July meeting

### *Show and Tell*

By Holly Carter

As the taxonomy of these animals are in flux, I will use the species name for them.

Kayla Duff started us off with her colorful Trinket Snake (*Helena*) from the sub-continent of India. These are small snakes, (about 3-4 ft long) and her Blue Beauty Snake (*Taeniura*) from Viet Nam, These snakes grow to be between (6-9 feet long)

Holly Carter brought a Black-tail Cribro (*melanura*) from Central and South America. These grow from 6 to 10 ft long. And a Black pine Snake (*Lodingi*) from Louisiana and Mississippi. These grow to about 8 ft.

Roger Carter showed a Spotted Python (*Macolosa*) from Australia and brought a Sioux Snake Knife replica with a rattlesnake head for the hilt.

Rory Wood brought his Corn Snake (*Guttatus*) named Rusty. He obtained him as a baby and told us about his cage setup and care and feeding.

Pat Hammond showed us a Taxidermy specimen of a Gila Monster (*Suspectum*) that had been in his family for generations.

Jim Horton brought in a couple of rescue animals, A Bearded Dragon (*Vitticeps*) and a Blue-tongue Skink (*Tiliqua*). Both of these animals are from Australia or Indonesia and required a change in their husbandry to get them up to par. He also brought in a Northern Water Snake (*Sipidon*) from Indiana and some artwork he did of the 4 venomous snakes of Indiana.

Ravi Sharpshanker showed us a baby Toad (*Americanus*) that he found at a pond as an egg mass. He brought these home and set up a container with water requiring regular water changes and then finding small enough food as these tadpoles morphed into toads. He released all but one that he brought in. It was 3 weeks morphed and could fit on a nickel. Good work, Ravi.

Marcus Buonfante presented his Central Bearded Dragon (*Vitticeps*) from Australia with info on care & feeding. He also told of his ant farm project. He made a formicarium with Carpenter Ants that he obtained with some flying queen ants and set them up and is studying how they start their colonies and the care & feeding these required. Good project, Marcus.

Bailey Russell showed her Dominican Red Mountain Boa (Striatus). She informed us as to the needs of a tree dwelling as well as ground time for this species. She also brought a Vinegarroon that she obtained for a breeding project for her different species of this animal.

Kristin Bingham presented the nature center's ambassador (Black,Grey,Central) Rat Snake (Obsoleta). He has helped teach many of the parks visitors as to the non-aggressiveness of these snakes. She also demonstrated a Chinese Praying Mantis. She discussed their invasiveness and that they were pretty well established. She told how to tell their egg cases apart from local mantids. She stated that they were causing a problem as they were big enough to eat baby hummingbirds as well as small snakes.

Jackson Schoettle brought his Red-tail Boa (Constrictor), a native of Central and South America. He had been doing field work and saw one in the wild and knew that it was the snake for him.

## Herpetology Quiz Answers

1. The Iguana genus only has 2 species of iguana- the Green Iguana and the Lesser Antillean Iguana. Recent genetic analysis suggests that Green Iguanas may be more genetically-complex than originally thought, perhaps provoking further classification of species in the future. It is to be noted that the family Iguanadae is much broader and includes Marine Iguanas, Chuckwallas, Rhinoceros Iguanas and more.
2. True. Once laid, the embryos quickly attach to the top of the shell which is vital for development. A disturbance has the potential to detach the embryo from the shell, resulting in the development halting.
3. Snakes can be born as twins, although it is pretty rare. It happens when there are 2 embryos in one egg. Although, the neonates are often smaller since they have to share nutrients.
4. Marbled salamanders actually breed and lay their eggs during the fall! The eggs hatch when the cold winter rains fill the pool basins. The larval salamanders actually eat and grow throughout the winter
5. Cane toads are native to Central and South America, but they have been introduced to Australia, Hawaii, some Southern US states, many Caribbean islands, and the Phillipines. They are detrimental to the native wildlife where they've been introduced, but they are a natural part of the ecosystem in their native range and their population is able to be kept in check.

Look for the HHS  
on social media



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# President's Message

Jim Horton

Our annual river float was last month and we all had wonderful time on the water! See a review of our aquatic adventure in this issue. Holly Carter wrote up a review of our Show and Tell meeting in July and Kimberly Scott produced another Herpetology Quiz! Enjoy!

Next month is the Midwest Herpetological Symposium in Southwest Missouri. It's an event-filled weekend of education and camaraderie. Unfortunately, I'll be unable to make this one. There is a very good chance that we be hosting this event next year!

Thanks to Yusnaviel Garcia for his presentation on herp research in Indiana caves last month. Yusnaviel hopes to learn more about the role herps play in these underground environments. He is looking for our help with herps that frequent our underground cave systems. If you visit a non-commercial or private cave and encounter herps, please contact Yusnaviel.

DNR State herpetologist, Nate Engbretch will be our guest speaker this month. He will be discussing the current status of Hellbenders, crawfish frogs, and Kirtland's snakes in Indiana. Hope you can make this meeting!

## Midwest Herpetological Symposium October 3-5, Springfield, MO

### Schedule of Events

#### Friday, October 3rd

5:00pm Registration Begins

6:00pm Welcome Remarks and Evening Buffet

7:00 – 9:00pm Socialize, Fun Evening Activities, Cash Bar.

#### Saturday, October 4th

9:00am – 12noon Morning Presentations

Silent Auction begins

2:00pm – 5:00pm Afternoon Presentations

5:00 – 6:30pm Break

6:30pm Banquet and end of Silent Auction

7:30-8:30pm Keynote Speaker: **Jeff Briggler** (MO State Herpetologist)

8:30pm Live Auction Begins, Cash Bar, and Socializing

#### Presenters

Keynote: Dr. Jeff Briggler (MO Department of Conservation – State Herpetologist)

Dr. Brian Greene (MO State University)

Dr. Ashely Exendine (College of the Ozarks)

Dr. Day Ligon (MO State University)

Dr. Bridget Zacharias (Gallaway Vet. Clinic)

Young Herpetologist scholarship winners and more!

Contact the Southwest Missouri Herpetological society for more information -  
swmoherpsociety@gmail.com

## HHS Board of Directors - 2025

PRESIDENT	Jim Horton	(317) 443-4845	<a href="mailto:president@hoosierherpsoc.org">president@hoosierherpsoc.org</a>
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## Appointed Board Members for 2025

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## 2025 HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

**September 17, 2025** – HHS monthly meeting. Special guest speaker – Nate Engbrecht (Indiana DNR State Herpetologist). Topic – Status of Indiana Hellbenders, Crawfish Frogs, and Kirtland’s snakes.

**October 3-5, 2025** – 46<sup>th</sup> Midwest Herpetological Symposium. Springfield, MO. Hosted by the Southwest Missouri Herpetological Society. [www.swmoherpsociety.org](http://www.swmoherpsociety.org)

**October 15, 2025** – Roger Carter (HHS), Topic – Knives and Herp Art.

**October 11/12, 2025** – North American Reptile Breeders Conference, Tinley Park, Ill

**November 16, 2025** – Midwest Reptile Show, Indiana State Fairgrounds.

**November 19, 2025** – HHS meeting, Daniel Yates (St. Louis Herp Society). Topic – Neuroscience in Reptiles.

## Photos from the HHS float on the Driftwood River



Ouachita map turtle



Spiny softshell turtle

# Membership Form

new member

renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Individual/Family Membership \$25.00

Herpetological Interests

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Hoosier Herpetological Society  
P.O. Box 40544  
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Dated Material Enclosed

Address Correction Requested

If this box is checked, it's time to renew your membership